

## Go for yourself from your land, from your relatives, and from your father's house. (12:1)

*Rashi* adds *L'hanaasecha u'l'tovascha*, “for your pleasure and your good.” Hashem telling Avraham to pick himself up, leave his home and family, and uproot himself and his wife to a destination that has yet to be “determined” is far from pleasurable and good. The pleasure is serving Hashem; the good is following Hashem’s command. One would be hard-pressed to find anything positive about leaving, unless, of course, one is leaving a miserable place, which was the case in Avraham *Avinu*’s circumstances. *Imrei Shamai* cites an incident that occurred concerning *Horav Nochum, zl, m'Tchernobel* which may be extrapolated to explain how Avraham would ultimately derive pleasure and good from his sudden displacement.

The holy *Tchernobler* was imprisoned for his involvement in *pidyon shevuiim*, redeeming Jews who had been wrongly imprisoned. The Russians would kidnap and imprison Jews on trumped-up charges for one purpose: ransom money. The Jewish community made every attempt to rescue these hapless victims of Russian cruelty. The *Rebbe* spent much of his time raising money and negotiating. It was a difficult endeavor, because money was at a premium and Jews were easy marks. He always faced demands for money. The *Rebbe* was incarcerated as a result of his “treasonous” activities against the Motherland. The charges were patently false. Meanwhile, the *Rebbe* languished in the miserable prison. The worst part was: the *Rebbe* had no idea why he was there. Apparently, Heaven had a message for him.

One night, an elderly Jew “appeared” to the *Rebbe* and explained the reason for his predicament. In order for him to maintain empathy with the captives whom he was helping, Hashem deemed it necessary that he, too, become incarcerated. Spending time in the wretched prison would increase his motivation to help his brothers in need. Consequently, he would derive greater pleasure from his good work.

With this in mind, we have a new perspective on *lech lecha*. Avraham was the consummate *baal chesed*, master of kindness, waiting outside his tent to welcome the weary, the hungry, the emotionally lonely – and physically alone. This most lofty endeavor can take an emotional toll on a person. “Am I really helping them?” “Do they appreciate what I am doing for them?” “I will give them a check and move on.” *Klal Yisrael* are true descendants of Avraham *Avinu* – not only in the physical sense, but equally in the moral/ethical sense. We care; we reach out: physically, materially and emotionally. Nonetheless, we still have questions: “Are we being taken for granted?” Hashem told Avraham, “You become a traveler, wandering from place to place in the hot, searing summer and in the cold, frigid winter. Once you have experienced what your beneficiaries experience, it will mean much more to you. Your empathy level will rise and so will your true enjoyment.” The one who empathizes has a right to share in the joy. This was Hashem’s message to Avraham: “You try it for a while, so that you will appreciate that much better the assistance that you render.”